

Message Text

PAGE 01 CARACA 00852 282013Z

64

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 281843Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2543

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

S E C R E T CARACAS 0852

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS PE US CI UR BR CO VE

SUBJECT: PERUVIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS

REF: STATE 16697

1. I AM RELUCTANT TO TAKE UP THIS MATTER WITH FONMIN CALVANI FOR THE PRINCIPAL REASON THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE NO EFFECT. FURTHERMORE, IN MY RECENT MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER, I HAVE RARELY HAD ANY TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION WHICH WAS PLEASING TO HIS EAR. MY CONSIDERED BELIEF, IN WHICH MY SENIOR OFFICERS CONCUR, IS THAT AN APPROACH DIRECTLY TO CALVANI WOULD DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD.

2. HOWEVER, I AM A CLOSE FRIEND OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE VENEZUELAN ARMY, BRIGADIER GENERAL JUAN MANUEL SUCRE FIGARELLA, WHO, AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, IS A VERY LOYAL FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES AND IN PARTICULAR OF THE U.S. ARMY. I THINK, THEREFORE, THAT AN INFORMAL DEMARCHE WITH GENERAL SUCRE (WHO WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY IMMEDIATELY REPORT TO PRESIDENT CALDERA) WOULD BE FAR MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SHOULD I SEE CALVANI.

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3. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, IT IS SCARCELY CONCEIVABLE THAT VENEZUELA WOULD BECOME A CUSTOMER FOR SOVIET MILITARY HARDWARE. VENEZUELA HAS RECENTLY ACQUIRED 81 FRENCH AMX-30 TANKS PLUS AT LEAST 32 FRENCH TANK TRANSPORTERS,

EIGHT AMX SELF-PROPELLED 155 MM HOWITZERS, AND ABOUT 29 AMX ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. IN ADDITION, VENEZUELAN ARMY HAS 40 FRENCH AMX-13 TANKS, 40 US-MADE M-18 TANK DESTROYERS AND A LARGE QUANTITY OF US-MANUFACTURED 155 MM GUN HOWITZERS PLUS A NUMBER OF US AND ITALIAN-MADE 105 MM HOWITZERS. THEIR INVENTORY IS REPLETE.

4. IN CONSEQUENCE, WE CAN SCARCELY CONCEIVE THAT OUTGOING CALDERA GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PURCHASE OF SOVIET MATERIEL; AND IT IS EVEN LESS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE ANTI-COMMUNIST PRESIDENT-ELECT WOULD EVEN CONSIDER LOOKING TOWARD THE USSR FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT. HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE A SHARP REACTION HERE IF COLOMBA OR BRAZIL SHOULD RESORT TO USSR AS A SOURCE OF MILITARY SUPPLIES.

5. NEVERTHELESS, AS INDICATED ABOVE, WE DO SEE SOME VIRTUE IN AN APPROACH TO GENERAL SUCRE AND REQUEST AFFIRMATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT.
MCCLINTOCK

SECRET

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